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Two views on 'THE ANARCHISTS'

1: Flowers to the rebels failed?

NICOLAS WALTER

THE ANARCHISTS by James Joll (Eyre & Spottiswoode 35s.)

JAMES JOLL'S NEW HISTORY OF ANARCHISM will inevitably be compared with George Woodcock's (which was reviewed in ANARCHY 28 last year), and will inevitably suffer from such a comparison. To put it bluntly, no one should pay 35s. for Joll as well as (or instead of) 7s. 6d. for Woodcock. Joll may be clothbound, while Woodcock is a paperback, and Joll may have ten pictures; but Joll is actually shorter than Woodcock, and, more important, worse.

In a brief Introduction, Joll justifies his own book by rejecting the "historian's cult of success" and insisting that "the study of failure can often be as instructive and rewarding as the study of success." Anarchism, we are to understand, is a "recurrent type of failure", for the anarchists have "never made a successful revolution". Nevertheless, we are glad to hear, the anarchists "have provided a continuous and fundamental criticism of the modern concept of the state, and have challenged the assumptions of nearly all schools of contemporary political thought"; and "the protests which the anarchist movement has made express a recurrent psychological need, and one which has by no means disappeared with the apparent failure of anarchism as a serious political force." There is more generalised and over-simplified discussion of this kind. The anarchist movement, we are told, is "a product of the nineteenth century", and is "in part at least the result of the impact of machines and industry on a peasant or artisan society." Joll lays great stress on the paradoxes of anarchism. "Anarchism is both a religious faith and a rational philosophy; and many of its anomalies are the product of the clash between the two, and of the tensions between

the different kinds of temperament which they represent." The best way to judge this chapter is to compare it with Woodcock's Prologue.

The rest of Joll's book is divided into three sections. Part One deals with the prehistory of anarchism. The first chapter—"Heresy and Reason"—describes the double origin of the anarchist movement in the extreme religious sects of the late Middle Ages and the Reformation, and in the rationalists of the eighteenth century Enlightenment. Unfortunately, Joll has chosen bad examples of both. His view of the sects is based on Professor Cohn's book *The Pursuit of the Millenium*, and therefore emphasises the most violent and authoritarian groups and leaders—such as the Cathari (or Albigenses) and the German Anabaptists, Thomas Munzer and John of Leyden—when it would have been better to discuss, for example, the Swiss Anabaptists, and the Diggers, La Boétie and Winstanley. Then Joll's account of the rationalists is for some reason dominated by Rousseau, who looks very uncomfortable in the place where Paine should have been; and if Joll insists on discussing Rousseau's ideas in a book on anarchism, he might at least have got them right—Rousseau was more interested in the corporate state and the general will than in the rights of the individual, and to quote Rousseau's famous phrase "Man was born free and is everywhere in chains" as an anarchist motto is to distort Rousseau's intention of justifying such a state of affairs! The chapter ends with a satisfactory discussion of Godwin, though here Joll could hardly have hoped to compete with Woodcock (and it is news that Shelley was "one of Godwin's first disciples").

The second chapter—"The Myth of the Revolution"—describes the beginnings of the anarchist movement during and after the French Revolution. Unfortunately, Joll has chosen more bad examples. The *Enragés* rightly appear, but what are Marat, Babeuf and Buonarrotti doing here? Fourier deserves detailed attention in a book on anarchism, but Saint-Simon? And Weitling needs more care than Joll is prepared to give. The trouble in this chapter is that Joll's view of the early nineteenth century revolutionaries is based on Professor Talmon's book *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, and therefore again emphasises the most violent and authoritarian figures. In general, this section of the book is highly misleading, since it deals with the prehistory of socialism rather than anarchism. One begins to wonder if Joll really knows the difference.

Part Two deals with the two great founders of the modern anarchist movement, Proudhon and Bakunin, and their quarrel with the authoritarian socialists headed by Marx. This section of the book is more satisfactory, though it is pedestrian and again cannot hope to compete with Woodcock. Joll's picture of Proudhon seems to be fair, but his picture of Bakunin is drawn for him by Professor Carr and rather overemphasises the farcial and fanatical side of Bakunin's career.

Part Three deals in a confused way with the anarchist movement from the 1870s to the 1930s. A chapter called "Terrorism and Propa-

ganda by the Deed" concentrates on the assassinations of the 1890s, but also describes Most and the early careers of Kropotkin and Malatesta. A chapter called "Saints and Rebels" describes the later career of Kropotkin, the French artists and intellectuals who were in or near the anarchist movement, and Max Stirner. A chapter called "The Revolution that Failed" describes the later career of Malatesta, and the anarchist part in the Russian Revolution, with particular reference to Makhno and to Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. A chapter called "Anarchists and Syndicalists" describes the rise and fall of the syndicalist movement in France and the United States. And a chapter called "Anarchist in Action" describes the Spanish anarchist movement throughout the period.

Apart from being confused, over and over again Joll has just got things wrong. Most of the assassins he mentions, for example, by his own admission weren't anarchists at all, and of course most anarchists have opposed terrorism—why then pay so much attention to terrorism in a book on anarchism? Sorel wasn't an important anarcho-syndicalist thinker, and actually had more influence on the fascist than on the anarchist movement—why then devote a quarter of the chapter on anarcho-syndicalism to Sorel? Why split up the careers of such consistent thinkers as Kropotkin and Malatesta? There are also too many silly little mistakes. Czolgosz, the young American of Polish descent who shot President McKinley, becomes a "young Hungarian called Czolgocz". Vinoba Bhave becomes "Vinobha Bhave", though at least he remains Indian. Kropotkin refused to drink the king's health, not the queen's. Berkman didn't just die, he shot himself. And there are some disturbing omissions. Where are Anselme Bellegarrigue, Benjamin Tucker, Louise Michel, Voltairine de Cleyre, Emile Armand and Bart de Ligt? Is it enough to dismiss Gustav Landauer as a "bohemian intellectual"? Doesn't Thoreau deserve even a mention? Have Shelley, Wilde and Read been the only British anarchists of note since Godwin? Where indeed are the native American and British anarchist movements? This book will be read mostly in this country and the United States, but its readers will learn virtually nothing about anarchism in their countries. Readers of ANARCHY who know more about anarchism than I do will no doubt find many more distortions, mistakes and omissions. It is true that James Joll isn't as consistently inaccurate as, say, Herb Greer, but then he is meant to be a serious scholar.

In a brief Conclusion, Joll repeats the arguments of his Introduction, with the addition of several rather dubious statements about anarchism. "Anarchism is necessarily a creed of all or nothing." Is it? "The basic assumptions of anarchism are all contrary to the development of large-scale industry and of mass production and consumption." Are they? "The anarchists are all agreed that in the new society men will live in extreme simplicity and frugality." Are we? The more Joll says about anarchism, the less he seems to know. But his main point is that anarchism is essentially a failure. To clinch this,

he quotes as a sort of epitaph a poem translated by Vanzetti: "Give flowers to the rebels failed." Woodcock, whose book was romantic where Joll's is academic, made much the same point. "Clearly," he concluded, "as a movement, anarchism has failed."

I think both Woodcock and Joll are wrong—not because anarchism is a success, but because the cult of failure is just as invalid as the cult of success, because anarchism should not be judged in this crude way, because ideas and movement cannot be measured on this sort of scale. The point of Christianity is not whether the Christians can convert the world, but whether Jesus was Christ. The point of Communism is not whether the Communists can make successful revolutions, but whether a Communist society is a good thing. The point of pacifism is not whether war can be abolished, but whether it should be abolished. And the point of anarchism is not whether we are a success or a failure, but whether we have something to say about present society, and something to do about future society. Joll, like Woodcock, accepts the value of anarchist criticism, but he doesn't understand this criticism, and, like Woodcock again, he seems to see it only as a permanent protest, good for anarchists because it provides self-expression, and good for other people because it challenges their complacency. This is a completely false way of looking at anarchism. It is not just a historical or political idea, a sociological or psychological function. As long as anarchism is present in individuals, in groups, in a movement, it is present in society; and it is present in society to a greater or lesser extent whenever a gain in freedom is won or a loss of freedom is resisted. Joll sneers at Kropotkin for seeing evidence of anarchism in the British Museum Library and the British Life-Boat Association, in the International Postal Union and the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits—but Kropotkin was right. Utopia is present in the topia: the free society is contained within the unfree society. Every gain we hope to make in the future is based on a freedom we already possess, and every loss we fear to sustain in the future is based on a freedom we already lack. We are here and now, and our means are our ends. What is important is not *the* anarchist movement, but anarchist movement—not the free society, but a freer society.

What the others said . . .

"His first chapter 'Heresy and Reason' situates the psychological basis of anarchism firmly enough in a fanatical desire for social change combined with a credulity that could lead its possessors to believe that the transformation they desired could be brought about by the coming of a millennium."

—ANTHONY HARTLEY, THE GUARDIAN

2: Anarchism and the historians

MR. JAMES JOLL'S RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOK ON *The Anarchists*, in spite of the "rave" notices it has received, is neither a work of scholarship nor a work of political criticism which will convince anarchists or be taken into consideration by serious writers who undoubtedly will deal with the same subject in the future. We obviously must comment on Mr. Joll's book, because as anarchists engaged in propagating our ideas what he has to say has an immediate impact on our work, favourable or unfavourable. If I thought the impact a favourable one I would limit my contribution to encouraging the efforts his publisher are making to sell as many copies as possible. Because I think it a "bad" book I propose to use up as much space as the editor of ANARCHY will allow me to show that Mr. Joll's book does not deserve the attention of people wanting to understand more about anarchism; that the reviewers who have showered their praises on it don't really know what they are talking about, yet without creating the impression that we do not consider constructive criticism from outside and within the anarchist movement to be something valuable and necessary.

I

I have said that *The Anarchists* is not a work of scholarship, and I think this can be demonstrated in many ways. Firstly Mr. Joll presents a picture of anarchists and anarchist ideology in which no anarchist of the last fifty years would recognise either himself or the ideas he stands for:

The beliefs of anarchists cannot be understood without an understanding of the political ideas they inherited from the Enlightenment. But their actions can often be explained only in terms of the psychology of religious belief (p27) . . . Yet, while anarchism presupposes the natural goodness of man, it is a doctrine that came to differ profoundly from the political ideas of the Enlightenment (p27) . . . "Man was born free and is everywhere in chains" becomes in fact, a first principle of anarchist thought. The idea of a happy primitive world, a state of nature in which, so far from being engaged in a struggle of all against all, men lived in a state of mutual cooperation, was to have wonderful appeal to anarchists of all kinds . . . The fundamental idea that man is by nature good and that it is institutions that corrupt him remains the basis of all anarchist thought . . . (p30) Godwin is a true anarchist in that he does not envisage property being exploited in common but simply that

it should be available for whoever needs it (p34) Godwin remains an admirable example of the philosophical anarchist, a reminder of what anarchism owes to the doctrines of the Enlightenment, just as other anarchists after him provide examples of the apocalyptic, millenarian temperament which makes anarchism so similar to the religious heresies of the Middle Ages and Reformation (p39) In fact, the successful anarchist movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were based on a combination of men like Weitling himself—skilled, independent, self-educated artisans—and men in a state of social and economic desperation, like, for example, the landless labourers of Andalusia (pp56-7). Anarchism is necessarily a creed of all or nothing and consequently it has less success in countries where there is still a hope of winning something out of the existing system (p275) They have never . . . envisaged any intermediate stage between existing society and the total revolution of their dreams (p276). When it comes to the point, the anarchists are all agreed that in the new society man will live in extreme simplicity and frugality and will be quite content to do without the technical achievements of the industrial age. For this reason much anarchist thinking seems to be based on a romantic, backward-looking vision of an idealised past society of artisans and peasants, and on a total rejection of the realities of twentieth century social and economic organisation. (p 277).

Secondly apart from containing no original research, Mr. Joll's book repeats the factual errors of other unoriginal historians as well as sowing his crop in the process of attempting to condense the material available. In this respect, since Mr. Joll invariably refers to his sources, he either expects that most readers won't bother to check them for accuracy, in which case he is being dishonest, or he expects that they will, in which case he is an inaccurate, and therefore incompetent, historian, undeserving of the lavish praise his work has received. If Mr. Joll or his publishers will adequately compensate me for doing so, I will produce a *detailed* list of the factual errors or the inadmissible omissions that result from the telescoping of facts (that is: unimportant facts retained, important ones omitted), numbering, if one puts it as low as one on every page, something like 250 such errors. I will limit myself to one episode in Mr. Joll's work which clearly illustrates two kinds of error of fact: the one important, the other of no material importance to me as a layman, that is, so far as the finer points of historical research are concerned. Just as I admire and trust the single-mindedness and devotion of the real historian in his search for every detail that will complete the historical picture, but feel unable to follow in his footsteps, so I despise the phoney who pose as serious historians, cluttering their texts with footnotes and source references to impress the reader that their facts are well founded, and am moved to expose them with the very sources they allege to be summarising. The passage from Mr. Joll's book which I propose to analyse appears on pages 175-6, where he is describing an episode in the life of Malatesta, and is as follows:

But it was the revolution in Europe, and especially in Italy, that was his main concern, and at the end of 1889 he returned to London, waiting for a chance to go back to Italy again. The chance seemed to have come early in 1897, at a time when bad harvests and rising prices had led to peasant revolts, and when, as a result of the demand for strong action against strikers and rioters, constitutional government seemed to be in danger. Actually,

Malatesta was not able to play any part in the industrial and political struggles in Italy in 1898 and 1899, since he was arrested early in 1898. He had gone to the port of Ancona, where there was an active anarchist group among the dockers and several anarchist publications, and he had thrown himself into the cause of the anti-political revolution, opposing those anarchists such as Saverio Merlino who felt that in an emergency anarchists should participate in elections to support the liberal and social-democratic cause. It was a suggestion to which Malatesta's firm reply, made after he was in prison, was: 'I beg you not to make any use of my name in the electoral struggle fought by the socialists and republicans. I protest not only that it would be without my agreement, but also with my express disapproval.' Malatesta was arrested after riots in Ancona and charged with 'criminal association'—a charge, with its implication that anarchists were no better than common criminals, which brought a cry of rage from the international anarchist community. In the event, Malatesta and his friends were convicted of belonging to a 'seditious association'; Malatesta was sentenced to imprisonment and sent to the island of Lampedusa. However, in May 1899, he succeeded in escaping in a boat during a storm and returned to London via Malta and Gibraltar.

I have not been able to consult Santarelli's article from which Joll gathers that there were in Ancona both an active anarchist group and "several anarchist publications". So far as the former is concerned there is no doubt. But the "several" publications seem to be figments of Mr. Joll's imagination (or Santarelli's), for Nettlau in his biography of Malatesta (Buenos Aires 1923) though he mentions a number of "ephemeral" anarchist publications in Ancona during the years 1885-1896, makes no reference to publications in Ancona when Malatesta returned. Anyway, even assuming that there were, since Mr. Joll is writing about Malatesta's activities at the time, is it not of importance to mention that he actually went to Ancona in 1897 to edit a weekly paper, *l'Agitazione*, which Fabbri, (possibly Malatesta's closest collaborator as from that period, and author of the most important of the three works published on Malatesta—the others being those of Nettlau and Borghi—to which, surprisingly, Mr. Joll makes no reference in his notes) considers the most significant publication edited by him, both "historically and theoretically"? For Mr. Joll *l'Agitazione* is a detail of no importance.

"Malatesta was arrested after riots in Ancona . . . and sentenced to imprisonment and sent to the island of Lampedusa" writes Mr. Joll, summarising George Woodcock, who in his potted history of anarchism, was in turn summarising these details: Malatesta who had in fact been

What the others said . . .

"Excellent, understanding, and scrupulously fair history of anarchist actions and beliefs. It is the best survey of the whole subject to appear. . . . An easy, urbane style that is congenial company for the narrative."

—THE TIMES

living clandestinely in Ancona, while editing the paper and maintaining contact with the movement, from March to November 1897, because he was still held liable to serve a 3-year prison sentence passed on him in 1883, was discovered, through no indiscretion on his part, and arrested. But by then he could no longer be held on the earlier charge and had to be released. He was, however, again arrested in January 1898 during a public demonstration and charged with "criminal association" which Joll writes "brought a cry of rage from the international anarchist community". More accurately it brought a public manifesto, at the time of the trial four months later, signed by 3,000 Italian anarchists, in the name of many groups and anarchist circles, in which they declared their political beliefs and affirmed that they were members of a "party" and in complete agreement with the accused. More support come from all parts of the world.

The trial, not even mentioned by Joll lasted a week, and, according to Fabbri, was converted into a battle for public rights as well as an excellent medium for anarchist propaganda. In spite of the fact that the accused were found guilty and Malatesta received a seven months' sentence, it was also a victory in that for the first time the right of anarchists to organise was legally recognised—which didn't prevent the police from arresting them for "subversive activities" for which the penalties were less severe. But this didn't last long (and only served to prove how right the anarchists were in not pinning their hopes to the law) for after serving his sentence, instead of being released, Malatesta was sentenced to five¹ years of *domicilio coatto*—forced domicile, (a procedure similar to that applied recently to the Southern Rhodesian leader Joshua Nkhomo). Malatesta was first sent to the island of Ustica and when the government got wind of his intention to escape, it transferred him to the more "difficult" island of Lampedusa.

Now, what I have summarised in the preceding paragraph has been summed up by Mr. Joll in this memorable sentence: "In the event, Malatesta and his friends were convicted of belonging to a 'seditious association'; Malatesta was sentenced to imprisonment and sent to the island of Lampedusa."

As to Malatesta's escape from Lampedusa I must confess I prefer Mr. Joll's "In May 1899, he [Malatesta] succeeded in escaping in a boat during a storm and returned to London via Malta and Gibraltar" to Mr. Woodcock's "one stormy day he and three of his comrades seized a boat and put out to sea in defiance of the high waves. They were lucky enough to be picked up by a ship on its way to Malta, whence Malatesta sailed to the United States" (Pelican edition pp329-330) or Max Nomad's "His escape from that island has the true quality of high

¹ According to Fabbri, Borghi, in his biography, gives it as four. Since Malatesta escaped after less than a year it is only of academic interest!

adventure. While a storm held the guard within doors, he and three comrades, daring what seemed like certain death, seized a small barge and put out to sea. Picked up by a steamer, they arrived safely in Malta and a short time later Malatesta was back in his refuge, London." (*Rebels and Renegades*, New York 1932, p30).

The source of the Nomad-Woodcock-Joll versions would seem to be Nettlau who, both in the Italian and the revised Spanish edition of his biography of Malatesta, describes the escape in a one-sentence paragraph: "He escaped from the island of Lampedusa in a boat with three others during a storm. He reached Malta and from there to London (May 1899)". If I pursue this matter further it is to show that these historians of anarchism (I exclude Nettlau of course) don't even get to the bottom of the tit-bits with which they seek to enliven their "histories", and not because I think the detail matters all that much. But for the sake of the self-appointed historians of anarchism, let it be noted that if Borghi is to be believed, then Malatesta and his friends landed in Tunisia. He quotes the *Questione Sociale* of May 27, 1899, announcing receipt of a letter from Malatesta informing them of his arrival there with "comrade Vivoli" with whom Borghi (in the old New York, but not in the post-war Milan, edition of his biography), recalls often discussing with amusement the escape long after the event, in 1917 in Florence. Fabbri, who discusses the escape in much greater detail than anybody mentions that Malatesta reached Malta but makes no mention of Tunisia. The escape during a storm, "seizing" of boats and the "guards within doors" all seem to be the products of the imagination of the historians in question. According to Fabbri, Malatesta and the "politicals" on the island had the complete sympathy of the governor who virtually let them do just as they liked "and closed his eyes to what went on." Malatesta made his plans for escape carefully and unhurriedly. Not only did he find ways of establishing contact with the mainland, but Fabbri recounts that even the socialist Oddino Morgari, who visited the island in his capacity of Parliamentary Deputy, was privy to his plans. On the night of the escape Malatesta, Vivoli and a civilian detainee swam to a fishing boat anchored some way out with the Sicilian socialist Lovetere aboard, clambered on board and set sail. Question to the historians: Could they have done this, during the night, if a storm which "held the guards within doors" was raging? We leave the historians to battle over this one while I pass on to what I consider much more important and serious distortions in Mr. Joll's treatment of the facts.

He refers, in the passage we have quoted above to "those anarchists

What the others said . . .

"Mr. Joll has written a most careful, scholarly book, in which grace and learning sit easily together. . . . Mr. Joll's book is full and complete, a fine work of history."

—A. J. P. TAYLOR, THE OBSERVER

such as Saverio Merlino who felt that in an emergency anarchists should participate in elections to support the liberal and social democratic cause "knowing full well that by the time Malatesta returned to Italy, Merlino had already passed over to the socialist camp. According to Enzo Santarelli, in his critical study of Anarchist-Socialism in Italy,² Merlino on his release from prison in February 1896 "immediately adopted a new position" and by the time Malatesta returned to Ancona in 1897 "Merlino had already taken up a parliamentary-socialist position (p106). Mr. Joll telescopes this whitewashing remark about Merlino with the quotation from Malatesta which he prefaces by "It was a suggestion to which Malatesta's firm reply, made after he was in prison, was etc . . ." Now not only was this reply not directed to Merlino (who was by then in the parliamentary socialist camp), nor to Mr. Joll's "anarchists such as Saverio Merlino who felt etc . . .", but to the socialist journal *l'Avanti*. And what Malatesta told them makes no sense as it stands because Mr. Joll omits the kernel of his protest. I quote the text of Malatesta's protest to *l'Avanti* quoted by Borghi from the version reprinted by *La Questione Sociale* of Patterson, New Jersey, January 14, 1899 (Mr. Joll, in what A. J. P. Taylor referred to as his "pioneer work" is content with quoting Malatesta to *l'Avanti* via *Questione Sociale* and Borghi—how thorough are our historians!), "I beg you not to make use of my name in the electoral struggles which are being fought by socialists and republicans; and in the event that anyone should insist in nominating me as a candidate I protest that not only would it be without my consent but with my expressed disapproval."

Having restored the full text, it should be pointed out that the letter to *l'Avanti* was in consequence of the inclusion of Malatesta's name by the socialists in their list of candidates for the municipal elections in Rimini, and that such were the means commonly resorted to by the political parties to set free their imprisoned leaders. It is clear that Malatesta was quite prepared to face more years of "forced domicile" than seek the loophole of parliamentary immunity.

The fact that Mr. Joll disregards it; the fact that the Merlino-Malatesta polemic on the parliamentary tactic had been largely conducted through the columns of the weekly³ which, according to Mr. Joll either did not exist or was not worth mentioning, does not mean that he ignores the facts but that he suppresses those that do not fit into his scheme of things. And of course he adds those that support it even if sometimes they strike one as irrelevant to the context. Note in the passage reproduced above Mr. Joll's gratuitous piece of information: "Actually, Malatesta was not able to play any part in the industrial and political struggles in Italy in 1898 and 1899, since he was

² Enzo Santarelli: *Il socialismo anarchico in Italia* (Milan 1959)

arrested in 1898" but he says nothing about the important work he did during 1897 under the most difficult of all conditions.

II

Apart from the factual distortions and errors—and I have dealt with one composite example in some detail rather than list them page by page—Mr. Joll's book suffers from the same major fault as Woodcock's *Anarchism*, that of presenting the anarchist movement as a 19th century phenomenon which has been left behind, historically and ideologically. Like Woodcock he therefore tends to over-estimate the real importance of the anarchist movements in the '80s and '90s and to write it off in the first two decades of the 20th century. Mr. Joll's thesis is that the anarchists have "never made a successful revolution" and he seeks to show that this is the result of all kinds of flaws and inconsistencies in anarchist ideas as well as an inherent inability of anarchists to adjust to the modern world. Anarchism appealed to the downtrodden, poverty-stricken peasants as a kind of faith; anarchism is a philosophy of austerity, a kind of religion which would appeal to simple-minded peasants etc. . . . This fanciful picture overlooks the fact that the countries where anarchist ideas had their greatest appeal in the 19th century, Spain, Italy, France, Switzerland, were also the countries where revolutionary socialism too had its greatest appeal. What strikes one about the late 19th century is in fact the passionate interest in the discussion of social ideas that took place in these countries. Marx as well as Bakunin, met their Waterloos in the political fog of Britain. And to this day the pattern remains valid, with the one difference that, compared with the 19th century, the revolutionary socialist movement has disappeared, swallowed up in political compromise, its leaders emasculated by their own authoritarian theories on power. The anarchists, it would be more true to say, have not only never made a "successful" revolution: they have never made a revolution. And the chances of doing so in the 19th century were theoretically as remote as they are today. What Mr. Joll has not understood, or has at any rate left completely undiscussed in his book is what anarchists mean by an "anarchist revolution". And this he could have done better than Woodcock since he indicates that for him, unlike Woodcock, the writings of Malatesta presented no language problems.

At the end of his chapter on Bakunin he writes

In Professor Franco Venturi's words: 'Bakunin succeeded in making a revolutionary mentality rather than a revolutionary organisation. As during the next twenty years, revolutionaries began to think of new methods of effective action, the revolutionary mentality often seemed in some places and circumstances more effective than a revolutionary organisation. (p114).

But a few pages further on he argues that at the end of the 19th century "the man with the strongest claim to occupy the position left

³ and which has been collected in pamphlet form: *Anarchismo e democrazia* (Roma-Centro 1949)

vacant on Bakunin's death" was Kropotkin and not "others who occupied a similar position [to Bakunin's] in the eyes of the police and their own followers." This is, in my opinion, a wrong evaluation of the respective roles of Malatesta and Kropotkin in the anarchist movement.

Kropotkin discovered the anarchist movement, such as it was, in 1872 when he was nearly 30, and his years as a revolutionary agitator ended by 1886 when he settled in London. From then to his death in 1921 his role was that of "the sage and the prophet", and his influence "evolutionary" rather than "revolutionary". In 1872, Malatesta at the age of 19 had already been a year in the International, had become Bakunin's collaborator and animator of the Naples section. Malatesta remained a revolutionary agitator and propagandist for nearly sixty years, closely in touch, when not involved personally, with the revolutionary movements, not only the anarchists, throughout Europe and the Americas. His writings are almost all concerned with practical problems, and nowhere does one find him indulging in what Mr. Joll calls Kropotkin's "simple childlike optimism."

To have followed the Malatesta rather than the Kropotkin current would have clearly upset Mr. Joll's preconceived plans (as well as obliged him to leave the well-trodden path laid by his predecessors and be involved in some original research). His stubborn refusal to accord the proper historic importance to the Malatesta current is so well demonstrated in the second paragraph of his chapter on "The Revolution that Failed":

Malatesta later remembered Kropotkin saying to him: 'My dear Errico, I am afraid we are alone, you and I, in believing that the revolution is near'. In fact even Kropotkin sometimes doubted it, but Malatesta never lost his revolutionary enthusiasm and temperament.

The reference comes from Malatesta's long article on Kropotkin written in 1931, a document of great importance for any serious historian wishing to place the anarchist movement in correct perspective, because it was the first time Malatesta had openly expressed some of his fundamental differences with Kropotkin's approach. Mr. Joll seizes the tit-bit and ignores the many important points made in that article. The tit-bit was a recollection of the 1880s when, as Malatesta points out, "we saw things with rose-tinted spectacles—alas, much too rosy." But the reason for this recollection was to emphasise that Kropotkin went on looking at the problems in this way, whereas he, Malatesta, didn't. He adds, "It must not be thought that we shared the same opinions on all things. On the contrary, on many fundamental ideas, we were far from being in agreement, and we rarely met without heated and noisy arguments arising between us . . ." And one of these was that Kropotkin "did not see the material difficulties [to be overcome in a revolutionary situation] or if he did, easily swept them aside . . . he considered as existing or immediately realisable that which must be won by hard and sustained struggle."

Again, if one wishes to present the anarchists as anti-organisers,

it is easy enough to "prove" one's thesis by overstressing the importance of the individualists and the terrorists, and overlooking all the patient work of thousands of anarchists throughout the world during the present century to propagate their ideas and to exert their influence whenever opportunities occur, among them Malatesta, whose whole active life was proof not of the "all or nothing" picture presented by Joll, but of the patient, tenacious revolutionary aware that nothing will be achieved except by "hard and sustained struggle." Joll instead presents Malatesta, in the chapter on "Anarchists and Syndicalists" as "accepting some degree of organisation" and asserting that he "like Proudhon, thought that it was the autonomy of small social groups rather than of individuals that was important" but as being worried by the emergence of the syndicalist movement because of the possibility of it "dividing the working class." I am beginning to suspect that Mr. Joll is more confused than "wicked"! The anarchist organisation is one thing, the organisation of workers to fight for their economic demands is another, and a workers' organisation which incorporates the short-term wage and conditions demand and the long-term transformation of the social and economic basis of society is a third. Readers of ANARCHY who also read its weekly sister journal will recall that Malatesta's views were published at some length in FREEDOM quite recently.

III

I must mention Mr. Joll's chapter on Spain, if only briefly, because the importance of the anarchist movement there as late as 1936-39 is obviously a hard nut to crack for our historian. How explain why the corpse which he, Woodcock and the Marxist historians before them, have declared was buried in the '90s, emerges in Spain with more vigour than anywhere in the world, and, equally important, more vigorously in Spain at that time than at any time in its previous history. Mr. Joll's conclusions are that

the real achievement of the anarchist leaders during the few years between Fanelli's arrival and the restoration of the Bourbons was not just that they had begun to influence the urban workers of an industrial centre like Barcelona, and to practise the revolutionary strike some thirty years before the development of anarcho-syndicalist doctrine in France. The most remarkable fact about Spanish anarchism was its appeal to the most depressed and desperate section of the whole population—the landless workers and the small peasants of the South. It was this combination of the artisans and workers in the most advanced industrial areas with the desperately poor rural masses, whom Bakunin had seen as the best material for revolution, that gave the anarchist movement its broad basis of support and its widespread appeal. (p229).

What the others said . . .

"James Joll has written an urbane, understanding, well-documented study of the movement. . . . Mr. Joll makes it clear that most of the leading anarchists were a bit cracked. . . ."

—JOHN LEHMANN, SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

So now the "remarkable achievement" by the Spanish anarchists is not in influencing the urban workers which the Marxists saw as their preserve, but of influencing "the landless workers and poor peasants of the South"! Yet the whole argument of those who write on anarchism to bury it and not to praise it, is that with the disappearance of the latter it has lost its chance of succeeding. Obviously it is a poor argument and Woodcock's facile explanation that the success of the anarchists in Catalonia is due to the fact that their support came from the Andalusian peasants who had emigrated there is not very convincing especially when you have been to Catalan towns and villages (which "went anarchist" in 1936) where up to ten years ago Andalusians were as rare specimens as were English tourists.

It seems to me that the historians of anarchism not only fall into the trap of historical determinism, but seem to lack the imagination to assess the positive ingredients of an idea that will eventually commend itself to a growing section of the community, and possibly this is because historians are themselves élitistes and close their eyes and their feelings to the creative capacities and initiative of the "masses" as demonstrated in the opening stages of revolutionary upheavals or in time of war (for example in resistance movements or citizen action during the bombing of civilian populations in the last war). Richard Drinnon in the introduction to his biography of Emma Goldman puts his finger on the reason why his work is valuable but also on why most histories can be picked up on the sixpenny market stalls, when he quotes his subject's comment that "if you do not feel a thing, you will never guess its meaning."

Marxism was a theory of social justice which was to be imposed autocratically. Anarchism is also a theory of social justice, but one which is distinguished from Marxism in that its means are based on a profound understanding of the practical realities of power in all its human manifestations. Mr. Joll's phrase "The Revolution that Failed" reminds me of that unhappy symposium published a few years back on *The God that Failed*, the pathetic *mea culpas* of those who had backed the wrong (Russian-Communist) horse in their youth and who in middle age became pillars of the Establishment. There are no anarchists among these penitents because those who discover the anarchist idea learn something which they never unlearn, whether in due course, they become trade-union leaders, capitalists, parliamentary socialists, or individualists. They learn not to rest their hopes in Gods and "super-men". If Mr. Joll had really bothered to know and to understand the psychology of anarchists he might well have started to understand the

What the others said . . .

"Admirable combination of serious history and social irony."

—KENNETH ALLSOP, DAILY MAIL

source of their strength and survival in a world where the "Gods" are failing all around us as well as pinpointing the reasons for the fortunes of the anarchists as a movement.

Before I get too old to see the wood for the trees, I would like to make a few comments which I think are objective. The strength of the anarchist idea is that even before the advent of psychology as a recognised science, it understood and applied it to both the ends and means which are comprised in anarchy and anarchism. Anarchism is both a short-term individual philosophy and the basis of a long-term programme of social and economic organisation applicable on a large, world-wide, or national scale. I and thousands of anarchists throughout the world—there are probably more anarchists in the world today than at any time in the 19th century—remain convinced by the arguments because its so-called negative criticisms of capitalist and authoritarian society in general help us to create our own *raison d'être* as individuals, while neither the dangling carrots of capitalist affluence in the present, nor Christian spiritual affluence in the "hereafter" offer satisfactory alternatives.

It is probably for this reason and the fact that most anarchists see the achievement of the long-term objectives of anarchism as too great a task for them to tackle alone, that there are many more anarchists in the world than anarchist propagandists. And when one seeks the reasons why the anarchist movement has been successful in some countries, within the limits that any anarchist movement can be "successful", rather than apply to Marxist argument which just doesn't hold water, one can link the success to the sustained efforts of successive groups of propagandists and militants who have sowed the idea far and wide. It is certainly the case in Spain the most successful of anarchist successes. And it is also certainly true that if no anarchist movements exist in the new countries of Africa, or in India it is because we have lost the spirit of the Bakunins and the Malatestas, the first Internationalists who saw the question of social revolution and propaganda as an International one, and who would have seen to it that they or another Fanelli were available to sow the seeds of anarchy in their midst.

Anarchists today have many things to learn about propaganda from these men of the past. Unfortunately it will not be by reading Mr. Joll's account of them.

V.R.

What the others said . . .

"The dustbin of history contains some attractive scraps."

—PHILIP WILLIAMS, NEW STATESMAN

Would-be revolution

PETER PLUSCARDIN

THE MAKING OF THE ENGLISH WORKING CLASS by E. P. Thompson (Gollancz 73s. 6d.)

EDWARD THOMPSON HAS WRITTEN AN HISTORICAL WORK with an inescapable political message. The English working class was "made" by the development of its political, revolutionary consciousness: it was this consciousness which gave it identity; and perhaps retention of its identity as a class is today still (or even more) dependent upon its retention of this consciousness.

The story is traced from the Pittite legislation designed to suppress radicalism at the outbreak of the French Revolutionary wars to the first formal attempt at mutual accommodation between the old ruling class and the new managerial class, the Great Reform Bill of 1832. The decisive factor was the Industrial Revolution. "The people were subjected simultaneously to an intensification of two intolerable forms of relationship: those of economic exploitation and of political oppression. Relations between employer and labourer were becoming both harsher and less personal; and while it is true that this increased the potential freedom of the worker, since the hired farm servant or the journeyman in domestic industry was (in Toynbee's words) 'halted half-way between the position of the serf and the position of the citizen', this 'freedom' meant that he felt his unfreedom more . . . The reflexes, of panic and class antagonism, inflamed in the aristocracy by the French Revolution were such as to remove inhibitions and to aggravate the exploitive relationship between masters and servants. The Wars saw not only the suppression of the urban reformer but also the eclipse of the humane gentry." (pp198-9,219).

"Large-scale sweated outwork was as intrinsic to (the Industrial) revolution as was factory production and steam." (p261). Taking for example the experience of the workers in the weaving trade during the years 1780-1830, what happened—allowing for over-simplification—was that three groups—the master weaver working for himself, the journeyman weaver, working either in the shop of the master-clothier or more commonly in his own home on his own loom for a single master, and the smallholder weaver, working only part-time on his loom—became merged in one group of greatly debased status, "that of the

proletarian outworker, who worked in his own home, sometimes owned and sometimes rented his loom, and who wove up his yarn to the specifications of the factor or agent of a mill or of some middleman." (p271). In the face of the increasingly imperious demands of capital, labour was beginning to see and feel that it had a common interest: the main characteristics of the development of the weaving trade—the debasement of the worker's status and the ending of his differentiation from other workers—were repeated in other trades.

Another process of definition was brought about by Pitt's suppression of the traditional radical movement of the eighteenth century with its slightly Whiggish, slightly aristocratic overtones: radicalism went underground and found a new champion in the people who made it their own movement. The social protest of the eighteenth-century bread riots gave way to more sophisticated political activity (though the simple and unconsidered nature of the riots can be and has been over-emphasised: and Thompson is now carrying out research which should demonstrate that they were not devoid of an impressive moral passion). The unsung hero of this development whom Thompson honours was John Thelwall, itinerant lecturer of the London Corresponding Society, whose consistent and somewhat unsparking radicalism became eventually an embarrassment to his friends Coleridge and Wordsworth (vid. p176). Thelwall, says Thompson, "offered a consistent ideology to the *artisan* . . . He took Jacobinism to the borders of Socialism; he also took it to the borders of revolutionism." (p160).

Thompson characterises and illumines his theme with a number of excellent analyses of the significance of certain people, events and movements. Perhaps the most suggestive and at the same time most far-fetched of these analyses is what amounts to a polemical dissertation on the influence of Methodism in the creation of a factory-work discipline. In an article on "Labour in the English Economy in the Seventeenth Century" (*Economic History Review* 1955) D. C. Coleman has described the recalcitrance of labour in response to the somewhat crude and uninviting carrot-and-stick incentive of a pre-industrial economy. And this problem had already been noted by Dr. Andrew Urr (the *bête noire* of the first volume of *Capital*) who, in *The Philosophy of Manufactures* (1835), pointed out that "the main difficulty" of the factory system was not technological but social, the "distribution of the different members of the apparatus into one co-operative body", above all "the training of human beings to renounce their desultory habits of work, and to identify themselves with the unvarying regularity of the complex automation". (quoted 360). Thompson takes up Ure's argument concerning the good disciplinary effect of religion, and contends that above all in the Wesleyan imagery of salvation whereby the sinner is "translated from the power of Satan to the kingdom and image of God's dear son", "we may see in its lurid figurative expression the psychic ordeal in which the character-structure of the rebellious pre-industrial labourer or artisan was violently recast into that of the submissive industrial worker . . . These Sabbath orgasms of feeling made more possible the single-minded

weekday direction of these energies to the consummation of productive labour". (pp367-8, 369). The part that religion plays in the formation of attitudes, and what gives it the power to play that part, are susceptible of further analysis; but this is certainly a provocative starting-point.

Luddism was a stage in the evolution of the working class political method, the last stage perhaps in the practice of "collective bargaining by riot" which, E. J. Hobsbawm suggests*, is essentially a sign of weakness, of lack of class solidarity. But both he and Thompson emphasise that machine-wrecking was a means and not an end, and that it was usually a very disciplined and selective activity. "Luddism", says Thompson, "must be seen as arising at the crisis-point in the abrogation of paternalist legislation, and in the imposition of the political economy or *laissez faire* upon, and against the will and conscience of, the working people". (p543). In the spring of 1812 Luddites attacked, and were repulsed from, Rawfolds Mill in Yorkshire. (The incident is the subject of Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*.) "The gunfire at Rawfolds signalled a profound emotional reconciliation between the large mill-owners and the authorities. Economic interest had triumphed, and the ultimate loyalty of the manufacturers when faced with working-class Jacobinism was displayed in one dramatic incident". (p561). But with an increasing awareness of strength there came a decrease in violence. "Let us", wrote T. J. Wooler in *The Black Dwarf* (September 1818), "look at, and emulate the patient resolution of the Quakers. They have conquered *without arms*—without violence—without threats. They conquered by union". (quoted p675). Even after Peterloo (August 1819) divided the radicals into those who wanted to proceed with caution and those who were prepared for immediate violence, the radical press preserved its new, self-assured and even mocking tone. Cobbett (who had left England for America in February 1817 and returned in November 1819) was impressed and encouraged by what he saw: "I am of opinion", he wrote to the Bishop of Llandaff in 1820, "that your Lordship is very much deceived in supposing the People, of the vulgar, as you were pleased to call them, to be 'incapable of comprehending argument'." (quoted p745). At last, points out Thompson, here was a national political journalist who wrote for a specifically working class audience: and so doing did much to increase its self-awareness.

"If Cobbett's writings can be seen as a relationship with his readers, Owen's writings can be seen as ideological raw material diffused among working people, and worked up by them into different products" (p789). Owen's *A New View of Society* appeared in 1813: the vague hopes of the working class began to receive a coherent form. "The rationalist propaganda of the previous decade had been effective; but it had also

* In an article, "The Machine Breakers", in the first number of *PAST & PRESENT* (February 1952), p 61, an excellent "journal of scientific history" published three times yearly: to subscribers (15s. p.a., students 10s.) write to the Business Manager of "Past and Present", Corpus Christi College Oxford.

been narrow and negative, and had given rise to a thirst for a more positive moral doctrine which was met by Owen's messianism". (p796). By 1832 Bronterre O'Brien and other radicals were emphasising the question of the means of social control (i.e. political power) which Owen had ignored; but they always recognised that Owenism had had "a great and constructive influence. They had learned from it to see capitalism, not as a collection of discrete events, but as a *system*. They had learned to project an alternative, utopian system of mutuality. They had passed beyond Cobbett's nostalgia for an older world and had acquired the confidence to plan the new". (p806).

I think there is something questionable in the way Owen's millennialism is seen as an aberration, although a significant and educative one, from the direction which the movement of social protest was taking. The millennialist fantasy of a world transformed by an individual change of heart has after all had as respectable a history (vid. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 1957, Mercury paperback 1962) and as wide a human appeal, as has had the dream of political power as the means of building a new world. Nor is it dead yet. Thompson quite rightly shows that Owenism was not an isolated occurrence, and says something of other chiliastic movements which appeared during the time of which he writes. But he sees the whole thing as subsidiary to and perhaps even derivative from the main political development, and does not allow that here are two aspects of the same human reality, often existing together in an uneasy but excitingly ambivalent relationship within one political movement (anarchists should know!), different but related interpretations of the one human desire, inseparable from each other in their eternal dialogue.

A partner not envisaged

LEILA BERG

CHILDREN IN CHANCERY by Joy Baker (Hutchinson 21s.)

SOMEONE ONCE WROTE TO ME, that she had often found the people who did things she approved of were people she disapproved of. "How very true," I wrote back. "Read Joy Baker's book *Children in Chancery*."

Joy Baker has won a victory for every one of us. She has established the right of everyone to make use of the law, against Authority; more specifically she established the right, already in fact laid down in the 1944 Education Act but hitherto made nonsense of by many Education Authorities that all parents can educate their children as they wish, and that they do not have to educate them themselves in the way they would be educated in State schools. She established that when an Education Authority speaks of the school that is "most suitable for the child", what is often meant is the school that for various reasons it suits the authority to send the child to.

She has shown an unflagging tenacity of purpose that very few of us, in similar circumstances, could match, extending over ten years including several pregnancies which, far from tiring her or distracting her, strengthened her purpose.

During her ten court appearances, one of which was to answer a demand that the children be made wards of court, and another resulted in her being sentenced to two months imprisonment—which could never be carried out—and the children being ordered to appear before a Juvenile Court—her statements on education were stimulating, hard-hitting, and certainly not "immoral" as Lord Justice Upjohn implied—unless "immoral" means "against the status quo". It is difficult to select quotations because she is not by any means taciturn, but here are a few:

"Compulsory education is in itself a contradiction in terms".

"At school you can sit children in rows at desks and tell them things and you may instruct a proportion of them more or less adequately in a number of quite useless subjects, but this is not education . . . The time at which education starts is when we are born—and there is no leaving age."

"I believe in education by natural development, and instruction given 'on demand' and not by the calendar and clock. And it works."

LEILA BERG, well-known as a writer for and about children, has contributed to several recent issues of ANARCHY.

"It does not follow that because a child for ten long years sits in school he will even be instructed, let alone educated. He will merely have satisfied the Education Act."

"The Authority can give their definition of education in three words—'children in school'. Whether the child learns anything, benefits, or suffers, doesn't matter to them . . . Could I sue the Education Authority, if my children did attend their schools, on the grounds that they were not giving the children a proper education?"

"I am not seeking to force my view on anyone else's children—it is the Education Authority who seek to force theirs on mine."

"It is a contradiction in terms to require that education be suited to the child's ability and aptitude, and at the same time that it must follow only one rigid pattern as decreed by a Government department."

"It is children *at school* who are brought up isolated from the normal daily lives of the adult people they will soon become."

Yet at the same time she is obviously blindly prejudiced, unsubtle, egocentric and quite lacking in vision. Does this matter? Only of course to those close to her, and that includes her own children, to whom she is devoted. Our children, and our grandchildren, whom she does not care tuppence for, inherit only her magnificent assets.

Joy Baker as a child was sent to school when she was six, already able to read and write. During that year she attended three schools. Her first consisted of two other pupils; her second was a small village kindergarten run by an elderly lady who terrified her (both by her behaviour to the less able children, and by her religious readings); her third school had three other pupils. At seven, she was sent to her first big school, where the noisy mass of children terrified her, where mass teaching bewildered her, and insanitary lavatories and messy dinner-tables (afterwards used uncleaned for lessons) sickened her, and where individual initiative was an offence. She remained at this school till she was fifteen, and came out of it with an absolutely fixed determination that her own children, when she had them, would never go through what for her had been a nightmare. She did not consider, and has never considered, that her children, or their schools, might possibly exist in their own right, with their own characteristics. Had she done so, had she been emotionally able to do so, we should never have seen the state and the individual so inflexibly opposed, nor cheered on the sideline as the individual won. Joy Baker insisting on her cage has set us free.

Her initial fight was with the School Attendance Officer in Bedfordshire. The Bedfordshire Education Office was, it seems to me, helpful, courteous and co-operative, and anxious not to have trouble. The Clerk explained to her that they had to carry out the regulations, but stated voluntarily that "many parents prefer to educate their children at home . . . May I emphasise that there is no suggestion that you or any parents are wrong in deciding to educate your children otherwise than in school. It is only that the Council . . . have to ask parents to give full information about the adequacy of the education being provided".

The trouble was that Mrs. Baker flatly refused to play, right from

the start, even with such a friendly team. (She says right through the book that she loathes organised games).

When she moved, through Buckinghamshire, on to Norfolk, leaving Bedfordshire still rueful and trying to explain, and Buckinghamshire on the verge of taking action, she found herself facing a very different team, one so edgy they even jumped the gun—although, undoubtedly, the difference has quite escaped her; in her view, as she says several times, she was a wild-cat defending her young from the hunter, and the individuality of the hunter did not concern her.

One of the first things that happened to her in Norfolk was that a woman magistrate, several policemen, one policewoman, and an N.S.P.C.C. inspector, came to her house at night when she was away on legal business, having left a domestic help at home. These uniformed officials climbed in through the window, took the children out of their beds, got them dressed, carried them to the police car outside, and removed them to an unknown destination. The domestic help was told by them that they would leave the children undisturbed *if she undertook to send them to school the next day*. When Mrs. Baker returned and discovered what had happened, she drove to the local policeman's house, but he refused to tell her where the children were. She drove to the police station, and after a lot of argument was taken to Dereham Children's Home. The matron refused to let her in, and when she called to the children the matron and a man threw her out and barred the door. More police arrived. She lay down on the steps of the Home and said she would stay there until they gave her her children back. Shortly after midnight a police inspector arrived who knew her father: he spoke kindly to her, brought her a cup of warm milk, promised her personally that if she would go some the children would be returned the next day, and took her home in his car.

This absolutely appalling and unforgiveable episode, set down in Mrs. Baker's book, has never been denied, as far as I know, by either Norfolk County Council or the N.S.P.C.C. If they have a different story to tell, many people would be glad to hear it. On what legal ground was it possible for the officials of a Home, supported by police, to lock out a mother demanding her children? And how did the N.S.P.C.C., in my experience concentrating always on keeping a family together, and on holding on to its unofficial status, ever come to offer itself as a tool in this brutal demonstration of governmental force?

After that, court case followed court case. Joy Baker was fortunately never aware of her own vulnerability. The force against her maddened her, but she never saw it clearly. She had the wonderful fighting asset of emotional energy without imagination. She went blazing on, until she exhausted her opponents. "Parliament", said Mr. Sparrow, Q.C., in exasperation "never visualised Mrs. Baker. There has never been another Mrs. Baker".

I am genuinely grateful to Mrs. Baker and her tremendous energy. She has made it clear what we must never forget—that an individual in a bureaucratic state *can* win the right to act according to his beliefs. But I too never envisaged a Mrs. Baker who would fight for me.

Sade as moralist

MAURICE CRANSTON

THE ELEVATION OF THE MARQUIS DE SADE to the dignity of a great moral philosopher is something fairly new; and it still seems paradoxical. To the average reader of his novels the philosophical passages are the parts to be skipped as the eye races on from one scabrous story to another more scabrous. And since pornography is either so exciting or (on a second reading) so depressing that it inhibits calm reflection, de Sade's philosophy has usually got little consideration and less justice. There is also a dearth in his case of the kind of reliable biographical information which helps one to understand how an author's words should be read.

One of the merits of Peter Weiss's play at the Aldwych Theatre, London, *The Persecution and Assassination of Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*, is that it lifts de Sade's ideas out of the context of pornography in which he himself chose to present them. How far the "Sade" in this play is the historical Sade is a debatable question. Peter Weiss seems to have combined two views of Sade: the existentialist one (found in Simone de Beauvoir's *Must We Burn de Sade?*) with the anarchist one (found, for instance, in Marie Louise Berneri's *Journey Through Utopia*). This makes for a certain equivocation; and in the actual performance at the Aldwych Theatre, this ambiguity is further enriched by the actor—Patrick Magee—who plays de Sade not as the flabby Frenchman de Sade was, but as a model nobleman with a lightly German accent; he brings to life the idealised image from the mind of the German dramatist. Indeed it must be said, not only of Mr Magee's performance, but of Peter Brook's whole production that it is not just a presentation, but a masterly interpretation, a creative use of the theatre such that one is lucky to witness perhaps once in several years. It is odd that this production, in which violence and lust are formalised as to become "metaphysical," to be grasped conceptually and not gaped at naturalistically—odd that this of all plays should have evoked the protests of the hearties; if such protests are not purely a priori ("It must be sadistic because de Sade is in it"), then they serve to confirm one

MAURICE CRANSTON, who lectures on political science at the London School of Economics, wrote the imaginary conversation between Marx and Bakunin which appeared in ANARCHY 22. His reflections on the Marat/Sade play, recently performed at the Aldwych Theatre by the Royal Shakespeare Company, are reprinted from The Guardian by kind permission of the author and editor.

of de Sade's observations (long before Freud had discovered the unconscious) that people dread a mirror which might show themselves to themselves as they are.

Some emphasis is put in Peter Weiss's play on de Sade as a champion of individualism against socialism. Weiss's "Marat" is plainly more of a Socialist than the real Marat, more Marxist (more Brechtian, dare one say?), but this does not matter. The point is that Marat was a champion of equality and authority; and that de Sade was against both in the name of liberty. And though Peter Weiss tries not to show his hand too obviously, he clearly sees de Sade's individualism as pessimistic but profound and Marat's egalitarianism as optimistic but jejune. And there perhaps he is not far wrong.

De Sade's most devastating arguments are on Nature. Practically all the French philosophers of the Enlightenment believed that man was naturally good. They said that if men were not corrupted by injustice, ignorance, and priestcraft, then they would live together in fraternity and happiness. De Sade disagreed. Men, he said, were naturally aggressive. If a man was to pursue his pleasure he would rape, torture, and otherwise abuse his neighbours, because Nature made men find erotic satisfaction in such deeds. (De Sade used pornography to prove his point; for if he readers got a thrill from reading him, how could they claim it was not true?) Modern psychology has done much to show that de Sade was right and the philosophers wrong on this subject. Right, that is, in his psychology; but not right in his ethics.

In fact the ethics de Sade bases on his psychology are strangely contradictory. On the one hand he preached that what Nature ordains men should obey; his novels are full of injunctions to cruelty and atrocious deeds. On the other hand, de Sade wants to oppose Nature. In a remark Peter Weiss uses in his play, de Sade says: "I hate Nature." But it does not seem to have struck him that if Nature ordains evil, the way to oppose Nature would be to do good.

De Sade's attitude to liberty is equally paradoxical. On the one hand, he was the most extreme libertarian, the most total anarchist of all Frenchmen of his generation. All law should be abolished (this is why de Sade opposed capital punishment—not because it entailed killing, but because it entailed *legal* killing). Equally he thought that all authority should be eliminated. All men should follow the principle of "Do What Thou Wilt," and not just those civilised beings whom Rabelais addressed. Yet de Sade did not think, with Rabelais, that such unfettered indulgence would make for an ideal life; he thought it would lead to the most monstrous wickedness, which both fascinated and horrified him. So de Sade is at one the most passionate advocate of liberty and also the one whose advocacy makes liberty seem unthinkable.

De Sade's attitude to religion seems to hold at least one key to his contradictions. He alternately denies God's existence and asserts that God is evil. For if Nature is God's handiwork, and Nature makes men evil, then there is no doubt who is culpable. As for God's supposed solicitude for his creatures, all experience shows, says de Sade, that it is vice which is rewarded and virtue which is punished. De Sade's two

best-known novels are *Justine*, which is about the misfortunes of a virtuous girl, and *Juliette*, which is about the good fortune of a vicious girl. This particular metaphysical belief which de Sade shares with Proudhon and Thomas Hardy among others, is not, of course, an atheistic one; for it asserts both that there is a God and that God is hostile to virtue and indulgent to vice; it is nothing other than Christianity turned upside down.

De Sade is far from being a materialist. In fact, he detested the materialism of philosophers such as Diderot, who made out that men were machines. For if man was a machine, there would be no crime in killing him. And de Sade was deeply attached to the notion of crime. In a very revealing phrase, he said: "Crime is the soul of lust." In other words, if there had been no Church to say that sex was wicked, sex would have had no charm for de Sade. He is haunted by God. The male protagonists of most of the orgies described in his novels are mostly bishops, priests, or monks; de Sade describes blasphemous deeds, like desecrating the host, in the same lascivious way as sexual deeds. In Peter Weiss's play the priests *manques* are the other patients in Carenton; but de Sade was really one of them. And it is his being a theologian gone wrong that limits him as a philosopher.

OBSERVATIONS ON ANARCHY 44: THE MORALITY OF ANARCHISM

I SEE THAT, ACCORDING TO IAN VINE (*The Morality of Anarchism*), Max Stirner "went to remarkable lengths in glorifying crime" and justified "theft, dishonesty, rape and murder." Since *The Ego and His Own* is available again it would have been quite easy for Ian Vine to have found out what Stirner really wrote about these things, instead of resurrecting a silly bogey-man. For instance: dishonesty. In the section of *The Ego and His Own* dealing with the question of truth, Stirner wrote:

"Those who educate us make it their concern early to break us of lying and to inculcate the principle that one must always tell the truth. If selfishness were made the basis for this rule, every one would easily understand how by lying he fools away that confidence in him which he hopes to awaken in others, and how correct the maxim proves: Nobody believes a liar even when he tells the truth. Yet, at the same time, he would also feel that he had to meet with truth only him whom he authorised to hear the truth. If a spy walked through the hostile camp, and is asked who he is, the askers are assuredly entitled to inquire after his name, but the disguised man does not give him the right to learn the truth from him; he tells them what he likes, only not the fact." (p. 297, 1963 edition).

George Woodcock in a Freedom Press pamphlet on *Anarchism and Morality*—written when he was an editor of *FREEDOM*—observed (I quote from memory): "It is immoral to tell lies to one's friends, but it may be equally immoral to tell the truth to a policeman." In other words, one tells the truth to those one thinks deserve it. Truth-telling

is not a "categorical imperative", but relative to the end in view. To quote Stirner again: "If the pursuer of my friend asks me where he has fled to, I shall surely put him on a false trail" because "in order not to be a false, traitorous friend, I prefer to be false to the enemy." (pp 301-302).

Again: crime. By "crime" Stirner means any act which violates the "sacred"—the allegedly untouchable or unbreakable. Statutory laws, conventional customs, moral codes—all these are regarded as "sacred" by those who benefit from them. To break the law makes one a "criminal", just as to disobey the will of God makes one a "sinner". Any anarchist who practices what he preaches is inevitably a criminal. "Respect for the law".... By this cement the total of the State is held together. 'The law is *sacred*, and he who affronts it is a *criminal*.' Without crime no State: the moral word—and this the State is—is crammed full of scamps, cheats, liars, thieves. Since the State is the 'lordship of law', its hierarchy, it follows that the egoist, in all cases where *his* advantage runs against the State's, can satisfy himself only by crime." (p 238.)

These two examples are enough to show that Stirner's ideas are rather different to what Ian Vine would have us believe. He may not be always an easy writer to understand, but he merits far more careful attention than many of his critics are prepared to give him.

Note: for a detailed treatment of "Truth" see pages 297-304, and for "Crime" see pages 200-205 and 238-242.)

London

S. E. PARKER

IAN VINE says of his hypothesis about egoists making love ("one presumably tries to please the other solely because such reciprocation of pleasure facilitates his or her own enjoyment of the act"), that it may sound unreasonable. It does, to this egoist at least. An egoist may give pleasure for such motives, but it is a fairly widespread trait in our species to enjoy giving pleasure, particularly to one who is loved. This is at least a more complex thing than the simple physical bargain of Ian Vine's description. If one may perhaps quote that villain Stirner:

"Am I perchance to have no lively interest in the person of another, are his joy and his weal not to lie at my heart, is the enjoyment that I furnish him not to be more to me than other enjoyments of my own? On the contrary, I can with joy sacrifice to him numberless enjoyments, I can deny myself numberless things for the enhancement of his pleasure, and I can hazard for him what without him was the dearest to me, my life, my welfare, my freedom. Why, it constitutes my pleasure and my happiness to refresh myself with his happiness and his pleasure."

Stirner did not "disbelieve in altruistic actions" or "virtually deify the individual." He disbelieved strongly in moral actions, i.e. actions performed because they are 'right' not because one wishes to do them. He deified nothing outside himself—in fact to speak of Stirner deifying is like speaking of St. Augustine blaspheming; you have to give your own precise definitions first. He certainly deified no abstraction such as 'the individual'. You are welcome to say that he deified himself,

but before I accept or reject the statement I would like to know what, if anything, it means.

To speak of Stirner as justifying any act is a fundamental misunderstanding of his position. His self-owning egoist need to further justify himself than to say "I wish to do this". To seek justification is to admit to incompleteness, to lack of ability to stand on one's own feet. One can justify oneself only with reference to some external standard or person. The egoist admits himself—not party, priest or philosophy, responsible. But here creeps in a verbal confusion which is neatly demonstrated in Ian Vine's article. In my dictionary, clearly separated by numbering are two distinct definitions of 'responsible'. The first sense, in which I have used it above, and in which Ian Vine initially uses it, is 'answerable, accountable'. The second, to which he switches without warning, is 'dependable, trustworthy'. The first is a descriptive use of the word, Eichmann was responsible for what he did, the second a moral judgment (Eichmann was irresponsible). To use the different meanings of the word as though they were the same to strengthen an argument is very like

"No cat has eight tails

Every cat has one more tail than no cat

Therefore every cat has nine tails."

Ian Vine treats 'responsible' like 'no' above.

Finally, though he claims no more than that Sartre gives us some useful starting points for developing our moral codes, it appears that his own is sufficiently developed for him to know who is and who is not moral. How else can he say that we tend to hate people who are really and consistently moral? If, of course, he means people who have a fixed moral code, the reason is simple. In most cases they hate us—we're sinners. We hate back.

Hull

TIMOTHY POSTON

IAN VINE THINKS: "Sartre can provide us with some useful starting points for developing our moral codes." I regret to say, however, that it has never occurred to me that I need a moral code! As an anarchist, I object to people's being exploited by ruling classes, but I do not make a moral value-judgment about this. I make a practical (or pragmatic) value-judgment. In other words, I do not say: "Exploiting people is morally wrong." I say: "That sort of behaviour—authoritarian behaviour—is contrary to the interests of human beings as such." Conversely, the idea of a libertarian way of life appeals to me as being expedient for mankind. But I do not consider anybody—including myself—to be under any moral obligation to adopt libertarianism. In that case, libertarianism would become just another "spook" (as Stirner would have said), another God to be worshipped, another grim duty to be performed religiously for its own sake, another source of guilt

Freedom means doing what you want to do. Hence it seems absurd to promote the cause of freedom, not just because you want to promote it, for your own sake and other people's but because you are terrorised

by some imaginary categorical imperative. Must we feel morally obliged to promote freedom to do what we want to do, whether we really want to promote that freedom or not? How ridiculous!

Why does Ian Vine regard Sartre's moral philosophy as being of special relevance to anarchism? Sartre, he tells us, does not believe in morality "in any absolute sense." That is to say, there are for Sartre no objective moral laws, existing independently of human beings and tyrannising over them. So far, so good. But Sartre does believe that every human being is somehow forced to lay down moral laws for *himself*. Thus one escapes the tyranny of "absolute morality" only to find oneself enslaved by one's own, purely personal, subjective morality. Is this really an advance? The guilty conscience, the mental torture of shame and remorse (*vide* Sartre's plays and novels), still remain to blight our lives, while the effort to live according to our self-imposed code (no less arbitrary for being self-imposed) is liable to make our behaviour seem strained and artificial. It was from that kind of self-incarceration, and all its undesirable consequences, that Stirner strove to liberate humanity. (It is unfortunate, however, that Stirner fell into the error of egoistic, or "psychological", hedonism.)

Apart from the undesirability of Sartre's conclusions, his arguments seem to me to be highly questionable. Even if it were true (which I do not believe) that "man is totally free inasmuch as his values and decisions are in no way laid down beforehand by determinism or his genetic and environmental inheritance," and even if it is true (which I do believe) that "there can be no external [moral] authority or guide for our actions," does it really follow that one *must* build an individual moral code? Surely not. It only follows that one must make free choices. But the mere fact that I may freely choose, in a certain situation, to do X rather than Y, does not mean that I have made a moral law always to choose X in a similar situation in future. Tomorrow, in a similar situation, I might choose Y—without feeling guilty about it.

Let us suppose, however, that I do make a moral law always to choose X. Tomorrow, I might feel a strong desire for Y. What then? Since, according to Sartre, I am my own moral authority, I could presumably repeal my first law and make another always to choose Y. Thus it is clear that my first moral law has no binding force; in other words, it is not a *law* for me at all. It seems that the very notion of being one's own moral authority is absurd.

Sartre, presumably, would propound some counter-argument to that last objection, and I gather from Ian Vine's article that the counter-argument would be derived from Kant's categorical imperative: "Act only on the maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." It seems that I cannot, in Sartre's view, change my moral laws to suit my own convenience because, by their very nature, those laws must always be "universalisable." However, as G. J. Warnock has pointed out in a recent BBC talk, Kant's categorical imperative is in effect quite toothless, because there is practically no maxim that could not be universalised. Even contradictory

maxims can pass Kant's test. Consider, for example, the maxim: "Always subordinate your own interests to those of others." It is possible to imagine everybody acting on that maxim. But it is also possible to imagine everybody acting on the contrary maxim: "Never subordinate your own interests to those of others." Similarly, the contradictory maxims of libertarianism and authoritarianism are equally universalisable. It is because of such defects that Kant's moral philosophy is now generally regarded as a failure, at least in England.

Ian Vine fears that, without individual moral codes, human beings would be unable to live in society, and he maintains that "any society is based on universalisability." However, as has just been shown, universalisability in effect neither prescribes nor prohibits anything, and it is difficult to see how a multiplicity of individual moral codes, each of which might be quite different, would necessarily be a basis for any form of human co-operation, let alone for *society*, which always requires a high degree of uniformity in behaviour. (As an individualist I am opposed to society *per se*, believing only in the independent individual family unit. As Hannah Arendt has pointed out, the modern conception of society—namely a collective of families economically organised into the fascimile of one, super-human family—did not exist in western civilisation before the industrial revolution, and there is no reason to regard it as sacred.)

The truth, I believe, is the exact opposite of what Ian Vine supposes. Far from being necessary for peace and harmony, artificial moral codes (whoever imposes them) are actually disruptive. Chuangtse (the first great anarchist) wrote in the third century BC: "The people have certain natural instincts—to weave and clothe themselves, to till the fields and feed themselves. . . . So in the days of perfect nature, men were quiet in their movement and serene in their looks . . . And then when Sages appeared, straining for humanity and limping with justice, doubts and confusion entered men's minds."

Why not simply trust human nature, without making any effort to control it by moral bullying? This craving for control is the root of all authoritarianism. And, after all, if human nature is fundamentally sound, it does not need controlling. If, on the other hand, human nature is somehow corrupt, its efforts to control itself will also be corrupt. The idea of self-control, which Ian Vine stresses so much, is actually as absurd as the idea of being one's own moral authority. So—away with Sartre!

Bristol

FRANCIS ELLINGHAM

IAN VINE REPLIES:

ONE OF THE PENALTIES OF CONDENSING INTO FOUR PAGES something which requires a whole book is that one leaves so many loose ends which can be picked up by those who disagree. Hence my failure to define and distinguish adequately between the uses of words like "responsibility", "crime", and "moral code" appears to have created some confusion. While admitting these deficiencies I do feel, however, that

had my critics read the article more closely they would have seen the inappropriateness of some of their remarks.

Timothy Poston imagines that his quotation from Stirner refutes my point about altruism, but to my mind it only reinforces it. Surely Stirner is in effect saying: I will do many things which pleases others—for just as long as it pleases *me* to do so. For the egoist the most important person in the world is clearly himself, so he can justly be accused of exploiting other people for his selfish pleasures. This I regard as contrary to the spirit of anarchism, which must surely respect the sovereignty of *every* individual?

Sid Parker, quite predictably, assumes that I was unjustly deriding Stirner. In fact I did not condemn his philosophy, all I wanted to do was to point out that the egoist position leads logically to certain attitudes which would be out of place in an anarchist society. I did not say that one *shouldn't* be dishonest in some circumstances, but that one must realise the implications—that one is in fact perpetuating things which one wants ultimately to abolish. This is an immense problem for anarchists, but one which too many of us disregard. Irrespective of whether or not one's acts are criminal in the legal sense the egoist is prepared to do certain things which he would not like done to himself, and it is for this reason that an egoist has no place in a free society. While there may be no absolute or metaphysical restraints on one's actions I believe that by continuing to live *inside* a society one commits oneself to a social contract under which one must not violate the rights of others in that society. An egoist is justified in committing rape or murder if his happiness depends on it—but not so long as he remains voluntarily in a society where such standards are not accepted.

Francis Ellingham's observations must be such as to condemn themselves in the eyes of most readers. "Moral code" can be *defined* as "standards of behaviour", and on that definition *everyone*, except perhaps the psychopath, has a morality of some sort. He also fails to see that *if* a community has freely chosen moral standards which are more or less general there is absolutely nothing anti-libertarian about them as long as they are no sense claimed to absolute or timeless. Francis Ellingham would abolish society entirely, so I hardly think that he can claim any right or purpose in saying anything about its standards of behaviour. I have no idea what he means by "why not trust human nature, without making any effort to control it. . . ."? If such a statement has any meaning at all it can surely be used to excuse almost every human atrocity under the sun? I prefer to forget human nature altogether.

I think it is significant that only the egoists have taken the trouble to criticise what I wrote. They always seem to be the most vociferous section of the anarchist movement. Considering the fact that they appear not to believe in movements I often wonder why?

IAN VINE

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